DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 328 PS 015 052

TITLE Institute of Family Studies 1983-84 Annual Report.
INSTITUTION Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne (Australia).
PUB DATE Nov 84
NOTE 45p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute of Family Studies, 766 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, Australia.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Data Analysis; Databases; Divorce; *Family (Sociological Unit); *Federal Legislation; Financial Support; Foreign Countries; *Information Services; Marriage; *Program Proposals; Public Policy; *Research Coordinating Units; Research Needs; *Research Projects; Research Utilization; Sociocultural Patterns
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; Life Span Development

ABSTRACT

The Institute of Family Studies has completed its fourth year of operation, and government and public demand for input from the Institute is growing beyond its capacity. This report focuses on current operating difficulties as well as on the structure and activities of the Institute. The first section, entitled "Structure and Operations," discusses the enabling legislation; responsible minister; powers, functions, and objectives; board of management and staff; and financial statement. The second section, "Activities and Reports," describes efforts toward community education (information services, family database development, public seminars, staff talks and publications, and Institute publications); coordination of family research in Australia; current research efforts; and advice and evaluation provided for the development of government policy. The last section, "Operational Difficulties," discusses administrative and research problems, the importance of considering impact on families when making government policy, the Institute's statutory independence, redefinitions of the role and functions of the Institute, and proposed amendments to the current enabling legislation. (CB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED255328

1983–84 ANNUAL REPORT

Board of Management Institute of Family Studies

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Institute of Family Studies

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

institute of Family Studies
766 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

PS 015052

© Institute of Family Studies — Commonwealth of Australia, 1984

Typeset by Bookset, Melbourne
Printed by Globe Press Pty Ltd, Melbourne
Designed by Lauren Statham

Contents

Introduction 1

1 **Structure and Operations** 3
- Enabling Legislation 3
- Responsible Minister 3
- Powers, Functions and Objectives 3
- Membership and Staff 5
  - Board of Management 5
  - Staff of the Institute 6
- Financial Statement 7

2 **Activities and Reports** 8
- Community Education 8
  - Information Collection 8
  - Information and Reference Services 9
  - FAMILY database development 10
  - Freedom of Information 12
  - Public Seminars 12
  - Staff Talks and Publications 13
  - Relations with the Media 19
  - Public Access to Institute Data 20
  - Publications 20
  - Distribution of IFS Publications 22
- Coordination of Family Studies in Australia 22
- Research 25
  - Collating Existing Information About Families 25
  - Explanatory Research 25
  - Policy Evaluation Research 28
  - Encouragement of Research 29
- Policy Advice and Policy Evaluation 30

3 **Operational Difficulties** 33
- Administrative Problems 34
- Research Problems 34
- Policy Impact Issues 36
- Statutory Independence 37
- Amendment of Enabling Legislation 38
  - Role and Functions of the Institute 38
  - Proposed Amendments 38

INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES
Board of Management

LEWIS HOUSE,
766 Elizabeth Street, MELBOURNE. VIC. 3000.
Telephone: (03) 342 9100.

Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans, Q.C.,
Attorney-General,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600

Dear Senator Evans,

In accordance with the Family Law (Institute of Family Studies) Regulations, we have much pleasure in presenting the fourth Annual Report of the Institute of Family Studies. The report relates to the period from 1 July, 1983 to 30 June, 1984.

K.J.A. ASCHE (Presiding Member)
L.J. BRYSON
R.K. BURR
J.F. DAVOREN
D.E. EDGAR
M.M. FINN
C.P. PETRE

Melbourne
November 1984

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

The Institute of Family Studies has completed its fourth year of operation. Last year's Annual Report provided a detailed description of the Institute's major achievements in documenting what is happening to Australian families. The Institute has consolidated and extended that work to the point where government and public demand for input from the Institute is growing beyond its capacity. Thus this Annual Report for 1983–84 places emphasis on the operating difficulties the Institute is now facing. The aim is not to complain, rather it is to outline the enormous potential that exists to improve programs that will support family life.

In its early years the financial resources made available to the Institute for its work were, for the most part, adequate for the establishment phase of a new organisation set up to conduct research and disseminate information about factors affecting marriage and the family in Australia today. The staffing resources available to the Institute have never been adequate. The Institute's full time staff has not increased for the past two years and the proportion of funds able to be allocated to Research Operations has actually declined in real terms over the same period. Failure to achieve growth in staff numbers has meant greater use of the research budget to hire casual research assistants and support staff for the major studies. While this has enabled the Institute to complete much of the earlier work it has resulted in a severe reduction in the amount of money left over for new research.

Because the Institute's publications are now received and read so widely throughout Australia, the demand for further publications and for the Institute to comment extensively on the policy implications of its research findings is exceeding its capacity to respond.

Despite management decisions to reduce the collection of new data and instead concentrate on the consolidation of previous work, the Institute is finding itself both

under-staffed and under-funded in meeting both public and governmental requests for further input. While this is a testament to the success of the Institute in its first four years, it indicates also that the time has come for a major review of the Institute's funding and staffing levels in the light of the functions that have developed.

The Board of Management trusts that this Annual Report for 1983–84 will enable the Parliament to appreciate the complexity and scope of the Institute's work on a national basis and to assess the adequacy of funding and staffing levels provided for that work.

1 Structure and Operations

Enabling Legislation

The Institute of Family Studies was established in February 1980 under Part XIV A of the *Family Law Act* 1975. This legislation stated:

'The functions of the Institute are:

1 To promote, by the conduct, encouragement and coordination of research and other appropriate means, the identification of, and development of understanding of, the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia, with the object of promoting the protection of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit in society; and

2 To advise and assist the Attorney-General in relation to the making of grants, out of moneys available under appropriations made by the Parliament, for purposes related to the functions of the Institute and the supervising of the employment of grants so made.'

Responsible Minister

The Institute operates within the portfolio of the Attorney-General. As a statutory body the Institute operates independently of specific direction from the responsible Minister. Because the Act failed to specify any financial powers, and the staffing resources available to the Institute have been insufficient to meet both research and administrative needs, certain administrative services are provided by the Attorney-General's Department.

Powers, Functions and Objectives

The wording of Part XIV A of the *Family Law Act* 1975 by which the Institute of Family Studies was established is extremely broad, but implied two clear tasks:

- to investigate factors affecting marital and family stability and, by implication;
- to monitor the impact of the *Family Law Act* on the institution of the family.

The overriding purpose behind both functions was to promote 'the protection of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit in society'.

Given that the Act did not spell out the Institute's functions in any greater detail than this, the Director and the first Board of Management agreed on a much more specific interpretation of the wording of the Act in functional terms which have guided the first four years of the Institute's operation. These were (December, 1979) as follows:

1 To conduct research on factors affecting family life and family structures in Australia. The aim here is to develop a more objective and comprehensive understanding of how families of different types are affected by current situations and by ongoing social change.

2 To supervise research on family matters sponsored by the Institute through grants made to outside bodies and/or individuals by the Attorney-General. In all such cases the research will be designed to suit the Institute's overall priorities and Institute staff will be involved in the research. Target dates, progress reports and the nature of the final report will be established by the Director and Board of the Institute.

3 To undertake continuing analysis of how changes in government policy (e.g. taxation, employment, trade, welfare, education, health, etc.) affect families of different types within the Australian social structure.

4 To serve as a central repository of information about past, current and projected research on the family in Australia, for consultation by scholars, teachers and practitioners in those professional fields concerned with the interactive processes of personal relationships.

5 To act as a consultancy service to provide expert advice and assistance to those working with families or conducting research on the family.

6 To educate both the public and professionals dealing with families through the dissemination of information about Australian families and social changes affecting them.

7 To act as an independent organisation to evaluate the effects of marriage counselling, premarital education and other services, including those areas of the law aimed at assisting families (e.g. the operations of the Family Courts).

In sum, the objectives of the Institute of Family Studies are essentially practical ones of learning about real situations through research and disseminating the information obtained to those who would use it in their work and to the wider Australian public.

The Institute will have a special responsibility to encourage, collate and coordinate the research and theorising of a number of disciplines such as the law, sociology, psychology, theology, medicine, psychiatry, education, domestic science, child development, public policy and administration, economics, community development, social work and others in which an understanding of the family is involved.

The Institute should in time establish itself as an authority which may be consulted by all who research or teach or work in the family area in Australia. It will establish the networks necessary, both in Australia and overseas, for a coordinated analysis of factors affecting the nature of the family in modern society.'

These functions were approved by the then Attorney-General and, in subsequent years, discussions of staffing and budgetary needs have been based upon that agreed list of specific functions.

As can be seen from the wording of these functions and from the wording of the Act, the Institute's role is an active one — 'to *promote* by the *conduct, encouragement* and *coordina*

tion or research . . .', '. . . the *development* of understanding of', with the objective of '*promoting* the protection of' — rather than merely a passive one of gathering objective facts as might be done in a university setting.

As will be indicated in the final section of this report, the current Board of Management seeks to clarify the roles and functions of the Institute and to have recognised in the legislation many of the objectives and functions that have already been developed.

Membership and Staff

The structure of the Institute includes a Board of Management, a Director appointed for an initial seven year term, and staff both full-time and part-time, the number of which are subject to government control through the human resource budgetting mechanism. In addition, the Institute hires casual staff and consultants for specific research projects or specific functional tasks as they are needed.

Board of Management

The Hon. Mr Justice Austin Asche, BA, LLM (Melb.)
Presiding Member
Senior Judge, Family Court of Australia, Melbourne
(Appointed to Board of Management February 1980. Current term expires June 1986)

Professor Lois Bryson, BA, DipSocStud, DipEd (Melb.) PhD (Monash)
Associate Professor, School of Sociology, University of New South Wales, Kensington. Seconded in July 1983 to the Victorian Department of Community Welfare Services for three years.
(August 1983–June 1986)

Rod Burr, LLB (Adel.)
Partner, Playford, Nicolle, Burr & Co., Solicitors, Adelaide
(August 1983–June 1986)

John Davoren, BA, DipSocWork (Syd.) MSc (Soc.Admin) (WRU)
Chairman, Alternate Care Committee, Advisory Body to the New South Wales Minister for Youth and Community Services
(August 1983–June 1986)

Dr Don Edgar, BA, MEd (Melb.) PhD (Stanford)
Director, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne
(February 1980–February 1987)

Mary Finn, BA LLB (Qld.)
Principal Legal Officer, Attorney-General's Department, Canberra
(August 1983–June 1986)

Clare Petre, BSocStud DipCrim (Syd.) MSc (Soc. Admin) (London)
Social Worker, Redfern Legal Centre, Redfern
(August 1983–June 1986)

Staff of the Institute

The Institute's staffing levels are determined by the government as part of the annual resource allocation procedures. At 30 June 1984 the approved staffing level was 27 full-time staff years made up of 21 full-time and 10 part-time members. Staff are appointed under the Institute's own Terms and Condition of Appointment which, for the most part, are similar to those applying in the Australian Public Service.

All staff, including the Information Officer, are located at Lewis House, 766 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne 3000 (Telephone: (03) 342 9100).

Director
Don Edgar
BA MEd (Melb.) PhD (Stanford)

Deputy Director, Research
Peter McDonald
BCom (UNSW) PhD (ANU)

Deputy Director, Policy Implementation
David Keane
BA (ANU) MBA (Melb.)

Administration
Kerrie Albert (from 9/1/84)*
Rhonda Carrington
Peter Good
Cheryl Manion (maternity leave from 30/4/84)
Cath McConville
Suzanne Munroe (from 13/3/84)*
Sonia Savannah
Jennie Sellman (to 14/12/83)*
Leanne Thomson (maternity leave from 6/1/84)*

Computer Centre
Leigh Baker
BA (Swinburne)

Andrew Prolisko
BA (La Trobe)

Terry Tremayne (to 4.4.84)
BA (La Trobe)

Robert Wilks (from 4/7/83)*
DipEDP (CIT)

Family Information Centre
Mari Davis
BA (Melb.) MLib (Monash) ALAA

Patricia Knight (from 10/5/84)*
MLS (Loughborough) ALA

Meredith Michie (from 5.3.84)*
BA (La Trobe)

Noreen O'Riordan (to 30/4/84)*

Fiona Finlayson*
DipLib (BCAE)

Deborah Whithear
BA (Syd.) DipLib (UNSW) ALAA

Information Officer
Elizabeth Sharman
BA (Tas.) DipLib (TCAE)

Research
Paul Amato*
BA (Calif.State) MA (San Fran.State) PhD (James Cook)

Andrew Burbidge*
BA MA PhD (Melb.)

Gordon Carmichael
BA MA (Auck.) PhD (ANU)

Peter d'Abbs
BA (Melb.) MA (Exeter) PhD (Melb.)

Kathleen Funder
MA (Melb.) BEd (Monash) MAPsS

Helen Glezer
BA (Melb.) MA (La Trobe)

Patricia Harper*
BA DipEd (Melb.)

Margaret Harrison
LLB (Melb.) LLM (McGill)

Christine Kilmartin*
BSocStud (Qld.)

Kerry Lovering
BSc (Syd.) MA (UCLA) DipEd (Melb.) MAdmin (Monash)

Frank Maas
BEc DipEd (Monash) BEd (La Trobe)

Gay Ochiltree
BA BEd (La Trobe) TPTC (Toorak S.C.)

Don Stewart (on secondment to Victorian Government's Social Development Committee)
BA (Durham) MA (Leicester) PhD (Otago) PGCertEd (Oxford)

Ilene Wolcott
BA (Rochester) MA (American Univ.)

* Part-time

Financial Statement

1983–84 Expenditure $		*1984–85 Estimate* $
730 203	Salaries	878 600
93 822	Travel	95 900
156 803	Office Requisites	59 100
61 810	Postage and Telephones	56 000
161 695	Office Services	165 600
46 597	Library	54 000
54 150	Computer Services	44 200
9 664	Consultants	20 000
53 331	Incidentals	133 200*
312 370	Research Operations	354 000
41 017	Works	50 000
90 401	Superannuation	120 000
–	Publishing & Dissemination	100 000
1 081 665		1 252 000

* In 1984–85 this item includes a one-off provision for the International ISA-CFR Seminar on 'Social Change and Family Policies' sponsored by the Institute and the International Sociological Association

2 Activities and Reports

The Institute has developed over its first years of operation a wide ranging set of activities designed to achieve its objects. Progress in these in 1983–84 are described under the following major headings: Community Education, Coordination of Family Studies in Australia, Research, Policy Advice and Evaluation.

Community Education

From the outset, the Institute was charged with the promotion of understanding of those factors which affect the family and family life. This mandate was translated into a variety of programs designed to provide readily accessible information services and materials that assist and educate all Australians about family issues. This work is carried out through the publications programs, the development of an active information service and research library, public seminars and workshops, informational assistance to the media in reporting on family issues and by public talks on radio and television by Institute staff.

Information Collection

One of the Institute's major tasks has been to establish a national repository of information about families and factors affecting the well-being of families in Australian society. To achieve this the Institute has set up its Family Information Centre (FIC).

During the 1983–84 financial year the FIC consolidated its library collection in all major areas. The FIC houses a growing collection of both Australian and overseas literature on families and matters affecting their well being and development. The collection's particular strength is in its holdings of Australian materials which now form the basis of the literature (from 1980 onwards) now indexed in the Australian Family Studies Database, an important new development in the Family Information Centre.

The FIC collection of overseas monographs and research reports continued to grow. In September 1983 the rate of acquisition of overseas materials was cut by 50 per cent to allow for deployment of staff time to the Australian Family Studies Database project. Although the financial savings effected were small, staff time was used for tasks associated with this database.

The FIC collection during 1983–84 acquired 720 monographs by purchase, 259 by gift. In the same period, the number of periodicals remained at 650 subscriptions. However usage of the periodical collection by both internal Institute and external users and through inter-library loans increased. Because of the increased usage it was decided to bind those volumes in heavy demand to preserve them. The binding of journal volumes began in October 1983, and by 30 June 1984 146 of volumes had been bound. It is proposed to maintain the binding program at the same level during 1984–85. The introduction of the FAMILY database online in September 1984 is expected to increase the demand for Australian journal literature through the inter-library loan system.

Information and Reference Services

The FIC's reference and referral service has been increasingly used during this year. Much of the demand for information has been generated by the Institute's increased coverage in the media and the new emphasis on the family as a public media issue.

In order to respond effectively to such general questions about the Australian family as issues of marriage, divorce, children and their welfare, the FIC staff has been compiling over the last 3 years what has been colloquially known as *the answer book**. In 1983 the library reference staff put in special effort to systematise the input to this answer book and to improve the subject access to the material in the Network File of Australian and Overseas Organizations that provide services to families or conduct research.

Detailed statistics from August 1983 to June 1984 on the information requests made of the FIC show that the number of questions answered has more than doubled in this financial year — from 101 requests answered in June 1983 to 225 requests answered in June 1984. The average number of requests per month has also increased from 123 during July–December 1983 to 172 per month from January–June 1984 (See Table 1).

Table 1 Number of requests for information and method used

1983	*Telephone* No.	*Correspondence* No.	*Visit* No.	*Total* No.
August	84	39	31	154
September	79	41	24	144
October	74	35	24	133
November	61	37	18	116
December	57	24	10	91
1984	*Telephone* No.	*Correspondence* No.	*Visit* No.	*Total* No.
January	37	23	8	68
February	58	62	12	132
March	85	62	42	189
April	87	47	68	202
May	133	19	66	218
June	121	39	65	225

The statistics on the categories of users making information demands on the FIC's service indicate that the main user groups are students (both secondary and tertiary) and teachers at schools, colleges and universities. The fluctuations in the use made by these groups over the year shows a marked increase during academic and school terms (See Table 2 and compare mid-year student usage of 40–50% to use during the summer vacation period of only 12–15%). However teacher and academic staff requests remained fairly constant throughout the period covered in this report.

It is of interest also to note the media's use of the FIC's information service was around 5 per cent per month during 1983–84.

Another interesting feature of the demands made of the FIC is the increase in the number of people now visiting the library to consult and use the collection. However the most common method of inquiry has always been by telephone as shown in Table 1.

FAMILY Database Development

This year has been one of consolidation and final preparation in readiness for the Institute's bibliographic database becoming publicly available on AUSINET, the national network run by ACI Computer Services.

In the pilot version the database was called AFAM (Australian Family Studies Database). It was re-named FAMILY prior to release on AUSINET, a name it was felt would be more memorable and self explanatory when ACI changed its policy on database titles to accept names longer than four letter acronyms.

In February 1984 the Family Information Centre was successful in an application for 2 people from the Commonwealth Employment Program. One full-time position and 3/5 of the second position were devoted to preparing documents for the database.

By June 30, 919 documents had been indexed and input to the FAMILY database. Forty-three per cent of documents indexed were journal articles and the remainder from books, research reports, conferences and edited collections.

Table 2 Information requests by user group (percentage)

	Students %	*Academic Staff and Teachers* %	*Government Departments* %	*Media* %	*Others* %
1983					
August	46	11	6	5	32
September	45	15	8	1	31
October	26	12	12	4	46
November	17	14	11	5	53
December	14	16	13	3	54
1984					
January	15	19	7	6	53
February	12	12	21	4	51
March	48	18	6	6	22
April	52	13	8	5	22
May	50	7	8	7	28
June	46	11	6	5	32

Sixty-four Australian journals are scanned regularly and articles by Australian authors in overseas journals are also included. Three Australian journals have been chosen as core journals and are indexed comprehensively. These are; *Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage and the Family*, *Australian Journal of Family Therapy*; and *Australian Child and Family Welfare*.

Analysis of the subject coverage of documents in the database is possible as each is allocated to a broad subject area. These subject areas will be used for the arrangement of a hard copy annual volume; the first is planned for December 1984.

Table 3 shows that the present strengths of the database are in the subject areas of — Family types, relations and dynamics (21.6%); Organisations and services to families (19.1%); Families with special problems (14%); Issues related to fertility and sexuality (10%).

At such an early stage such figures have no bearing on the amount of literature in an area or even popular topics in a given year, but in future years such analysis will be possible. At present, only current material is being indexed. The aim is to eventually include all literature back to 1980, estimated as a further 3600 items.

Work is also progressing on a thesaurus of subject terms used in FAMILY. It is planned to make the thesaurus and a user guide available for sale when the database becomes public in September 1984.

Table 3 Subject coverage in the FAMILY database at 30 June 1984

	%
Trends and Change in Marriage and the Family Includes: Family and Social change; Social policy	5.2
Family and Society Includes: Employment; Technology; Media	3.1
Family and the Law Includes: Divorce and separation; Custody and Child support: Children's rights	6.3
Organisations and Services to Family Includes: Adoption and foster care; Child care; Education; Health services and policy; Housing; Social security	19.1
Economics and the Family Includes: Economic policy and economic arrangements within families	2.8
Family Types, Relations and Dynamics Includes: Adolescents, Aged; Children; Family relationships; Parents and parenting; Singles; One parent families; Stepfamilies	21.6
Mate Selection and Marriage Includes: Marriage; Remarriage; Cohabitation	2.4
Issues Related to Fertility and Sexuality Includes: Abortion, Childlessness; Family planning; Infertility; Sexual attitudes and behaviour	10
Minority Groups Includes: Aboriginal families; Migrant families	4.5
Families with Special Problems Includes: Child abuse; Disabled; Family violence; Unemployment	14
Counselling and Education for Marriage and Parenthood	8.2
Research and Methodology	.07

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation has made for greater public awareness of the availability of information from government bodies and an expectation of receiving answers to queries made. Although the Institute has had few requests invoking the FOI legislation, it is believed that many inquiries about the activities, functions and research projects of the Institute have arisen because of this public awareness of FOI. The number of inquiries directly related to IFS as a government instrumentality have increased during the year reported. The main increase in requests has however been for information on all kinds of family matters in the following broad subject areas: trends and change in marriage and the family; family law; family relationships and dynamics; services to families; issues related to reproduction and sexuality; families with special problems. (See Table 4)

The Institute publicised the Freedom of Information Act and how to use it in its Newsletter (No. 9, April 1984) and in response had a number of requests to speak on the issue and was able to advise people of the appropriate agency to answer their questions.

In addition to that referral role, the Institute has eased access to information in its own files by improved Registry procedures, and, in line with all Commonwealth agencies, publishes in the Government Directory detailed information about the sort of files held, its functions and decision making powers and any arrangements for outside participation. Under the Act the Institute also makes available any internal guidelines used in making decisions concerning the public, for example the guidelines under which Institute Support Grants are awarded for research about families.

Public Seminars

The Institute attempts to bring the findings of its research and its policy analyses to the wider Australian audience by conducting public seminars in all states and territories.

During 1983–84 a series of Family Impact Seminars was held in the capital cities of each state on the topic 'Community Based Services'. At these seminars papers were presented on family support services, children's services, and the results of the Institute's study of Family Support Networks. In each State relevant government departments and community organisations were invited to present papers discussing these topics from their particular point of view. The seminars attracted over 1000 participants and led to the development of closer relationships with all State government departments involved. A report on these seminars has been prepared for distribution throughout Australia.

Table 4 Information inquiry subjects, January–June, 1984

	June	*May*	*April*	*March*	*Feb*	*Jan*
General inquiries about IFS	52	29	24	37	31	16
Trends & change in marriage & family	27	26	24	17	14	11
Family law	40	37	50	38	18	6
Family relationships & dynamics	22	9	13	28	15	9
Services to families	30	35	23	22	16	5
Reproduction & sexuality	4	24	11	13	9	3
Families with special problems	40	45	53	31	26	12
Other matters	10	13	4	3	5	5
Total inquiries	225	218	202	189	132	68

During 1983–84 the following seminars were held:

8 July, 1983 — Family Impact Seminar on Community Based Services for Children and Families, Hobart, Tasmania

15 July, 1983 — Family Impact Seminar on Community Based Services for Children and Families, Adelaide, South Australia

16 September, 1983 — Family Impact Seminar on Community Based Services for Children and Families, Perth, Western Australia

14 October, 1983 — Family Impact Seminar on Community Based Services for Children and Families, Darwin, Northern Territory

23-25 November, 1983 — Australian Family Research Conference, Canberra, ACT (See Coordination of Family Studies in Australia on pp 22-23 for details)

23-24 February, 1984 — Conference on 'Family Studies in Professional Training', Melbourne

28 February, 1984 — Australian Children's Television Foundation/IFS joint seminar on 'Children in Today's Families'

9 April, 1984 — Visiting Professor Orjan Hultaker, Seminar on 'Swedish Income Transfer Policies' to Social Welfare Policy Secretariat, Canberra

Staff Talks and Publications

Members of the Institute staff frequently give talks to government and non-government organisations about the Institute's work and its research findings. The following lists the major talks given by staff members during 1983–84 together with their publications.

Paul Amato

Talks

'Attribution of responsibility and helping behaviour in the Ash Wednesday Bushfires'. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Psychological Society, Sydney, 1 September 1983

'The Social psychology of helping behaviour'. Talk given at the Department of Psychology, Swinburne Institute of Technology, 7 May 1984

Publications

'Family conflict and child competence', in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. VI, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 1–47

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale: an evaluation of its use on an Australian population. *Working Paper No. 6*, Institute of Family Studies, April, 1984

'Helping behaviour in urban and rural environments: field studies based on a taxonomic organisation of helping episodes,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 45, pp. 571–586, 1983

'The helpfulness of urbanites and small town dwellers: a test between two broad theoretical positions', *Australian Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 35, pp. 233–243, 1983

'The effects of urbanisation on interpersonal behaviour: field studies in Papua New Guinea', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 14, pp. 353–367, 1983

Andrew Burbidge

Publications

'Improving Social Security programs: some options and barriers', in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. IV, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 1–51

Peter d'Abbs

Talks

'Social suport and access to services in an Australian community'. Paper presented at Family Impact Seminars sponsored by the Institute of Family Studies on *Community-Based Services for Children and Families* in Hobart (8 July 1983) and Adelaide (15 July 1983)

Publications

'Domestic violence between adults in the Northern Territory: a review of current services and a strategy for the future'. Report prepared for the Community Welfare Division, Northern Territory Department of Community Development, October 1983

'Family support networks and use of formal services in Geelong', in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. V, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 85–105

Gordon Carmichael

Talks

'Change and the family in Australia'. Paper presented at the South Australian Women's Council of the Liberal Party Conference, Adelaide, 4 May 1984

'The changing Australian family: demographic perspectives'. Paper presented at the Images of The Family Seminar, Queensland Women's Coalition, Brisbane, 17 June 1984

Publications

'Solo-parent families in New Zealand: historical perspective and a 1976 Census profile', *New Zealand Population Review*, Vol. 9, 1983, pp. 3-24

'Measuring fertility associated with ex-nuptial conceptions: a further response to Betts'. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 20, 1984, pp. 93-99

'The transition to marriage: trends in age at first marriage and proportions marrying in Australia', *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23-25 November 1983, Vol. I, Institute of Family Studies, pp. 99-175

Don Edgar

Talks

'Family research and social policy'. Talk to Department of Psychology, University of Melbourne, Postgraduate Seminar, 26 July 1983

Address to Catholic Social Welfare Commission, Brisbane; address to Family Support Services Conference on 'Changing Families: Policy Direction and Priorities'; meeting with Queensland Year of the Family Committee, meeting with Queensland Department of Children's Services, 11 October 1983

Darwin Family Impact Seminar sponsored by the Institute of Family Studies on 'Community-Based Services for Children and Families', 13–14 October 1983

Opening address, public forum, and closing address for First Australian Family Research Conference, Canberra, 23–25 November 1983

Hearing with Review Committee, Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, Melbourne 29 February 1984

'Children's Services in Victoria'. Address to Victorian Primary Curriculum Conference, Lorne, 6 March 1984

'Separation and family breakdown'. Address to Royal College of General Practitioners, 9 March 1984

'Changing families and children's services'. Key paper at Conference of NSW Baptist Child Care Association, Sydney, 24 March 1984

'Changing patterns of marriage breakdown'. Address to Melbourne Family Court Counsellors, 3 April 1984

'Family changes affecting schools'. Address to Curriculum Officers' Conference, Melbourne, 3 May 1984

'Reforming children's services'. Address to Conference of Early Childhood workers, 14 May 1984

Visit to Family Impact Seminar, Washington DC, USA, 14 June 1984

Publications

'Closing address' in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. VII, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 44–54

Kate Funder

Talks

'Developmental trends in adolescent career choice'. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Psychological Society, Perth, 18–24 August 1983

'Trait approaches to personality'. Lecture given to 3rd year psychology students at Swinburne Institute of Technology, 27 March 1984

'The family in the secondary school curriculum', lecture and co-ordinator of a Workshop conducted for the Public Welfare Co-ordinators' Training Program, Victorian Education Department, 27 March 1984

Helen Glezer

Publications

'Changes in marriage and sex-role attitudes among young married women, 1971–1982', in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. I, Institute of Family Studies, pp. 201–255

Tricia Harper

Talks

'Summary and overview' for ACOSS Congress, 8–10 September 1983

'Developments in adoption and substitute care for children'. Lecture to Monash University Law Faculty, Melbourne, 26 September 1983

'Lost but still alive — the natural parent's need to know'. Paper delivered at Monash University Centre for Human Bioethics Conference on *Adoption and AID: Access to Information*, 2 November 1983

'Maintenance — background and context to the Report on a Maintenance Agency for Australia'. Paper delivered at a Seminar of VCOSS and the Victorian Social Security Consultative Committee on 'A Maintenance Agency for Australia', Melbourne, 16 April 1984

'Caring for children in families — alternatives to traditional adoption'. Paper delivered at a Seminar at University of Western Australia, Department of Social Work and Social Administration on 'Substitute Care for Children: Emerging Issues', Perth, 25 May 1984

Publications

Children in stepfamilies: their legal and family status. *Policy Background Paper No. 4*, Institute of Family Studies, April 1984

Margaret Harrison

Talks

'Changing Australian families'. Talk given to the State Conference of the Presentation Order, Loreto Convent, Melbourne, 16 July 1983

'Changing Australian families and the law'. Talk given to the Child Under Threat Seminar, Brisbane, 8 August 1983

'Matrimonial property'. Talk given to the Salvation Army Consultative Committee, Melbourne, 8 March 1984

Publications

Attitudes of divorced men and women to the Family Court, in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. II, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 1–49

Frank Maas

Talks

'Issues confronting the localisation of services to children and families'. Paper presented at Family Impact Seminars sponsored by the Institute of Family Studies on *Community-Based Services for Children and Families* in Hobart (8 July 1983), Adelaide (15 July 1983), Perth (15 September 1983), Darwin (14 October 1983)

Guest speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Mission of St James and St John, Melbourne, 27 October 1983

'Family as a focus for policies'. Talk given to policy advisers to the Victorian Cabinet, Melbourne, 5 December 1983

Address to the National Party Family Policy Group, Melbourne, 16 June 1984

'Families in Australia'. Address to Kingswood College, Melbourne, 25 June 1984

Publications

'Policies for families' in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. IV, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 281–321

'Should families be a focus for policies?' *Policy Background Paper No. 5*, Institute of Family Studies, June 1984

'Family feuds', *Australian Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1984

Peter McDonald

Talks

Conference at East-West Population Institute, Honolulu, 'Family Research in Asia', August 1983

Talk to Visiting Child Health Nurses in-service training, Health Commission of Victoria, April 1983

Talk to Contemporary Indonesia Study Group, Monash University, on 'Youth and social change in Indonesia', June 1984

Publications

'Approaches to massive population growth: the case of Indonesia' in Gavin W. Jones (ed.) *Demographic Transition in Asia*, Maruzen Asia, Singapore, pp. 125–146

Pedoman Analisa Data Census Indonesia, 1971–1980. (A Manual for the Analysis of Indonesian Census Data, 1971–1980), Editor, Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, Canberra, p. 484

'Can the family survive', *Australian Society*, Vol. 2, No. 11, December 1983, pp. 3–8 which was reprinted as *Discussion Paper No. 11*, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne

'The baby boom generation as reproducers: fertility in Australia in the late 1970s and the 1980s; in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. 1, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 13–52

Gay Ochiltree

Talks

'Children in families; the history of childhood'. Radio interview, the Catholic Hour, 3AW, Melbourne, 3 June 1983

'Adolescents in changing families'. Talk given to the State Conference of the Presentation Order, Loreto Convent, Melbourne, 16 July 1983

'Divorce and remarriage: the efffects on children under 8'. Talk given at the Child Under Threat Seminar, Brisbane, 4 August 1983

'Evaluation of child care program'. Talk given at Lady Gowrie Centre, Melbourne, 17 August 1983

'The changing role of the family'. Keynote address to the annual meeting of the Western Regions Pre-school Association, Melbourne, 18 August 1983

'Report from Australia'. Paper given at the OECD:CERI joint conference with Japan on The Educational Role of the Family, Japan, 25–27 October 1983

'Australian families and links with schools'. Talk given at the Hyogo Lifelong Education Centre, Japan, 29 October 1983

'Changing families in changing social contexts and the relationships between schools, children and families'. Talk given at the Western Regional Office of the Education Department, Melbourne, 2 December 1984

'Parenting'. Talk given at a seminar for consultants at the Education Department, Melbourne, 6 March 1984

'Children in families', 'School and community relationships — support groups in the community'. Talks given at a seminar for principals and teachers, Brigidine Order, Melbourne, 13 April 1984

'Re-formed and blended families'. Talk given to Australian Association of Early Childhood Educators, Melbourne, 12 May 1984

'Adolescents and families'. Interview on Alan Stokes program, 3LO, Melbourne, 21 May 1984

Publications

'Family conflict and child competence' in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra, 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. VI, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 1–47

'A challenge for teachers: Australian children in changing families' in *Pursuit*, Victorian Education Department, No. 11, 1983. Republished in *Links*, Queensland Education Department, 1983

'Adolescence and the family' in *Pursuit*, Victorian Education Department, No. 12, 1984

'The effects of family conflict on the competence of children' in *The Educational Magazine*, Victorian Education Department, Vol. 41, No. 4, 1984

Ilene Wolcot

Talks

'The changing world of marriage'. Talk given at the Australian Association for Marriage Education Conference, Adelaide, 2–4 October 1983

'Blended families'. Talk given to the Council for the Single Mother and her Child, Melbourne, 11 September 1983

'The second time around — blended families and remarriage'. Talk given at the Maroondah Social Health Centre, Melbourne, 8 December 1983

Address to the in-service training session for teachers involved in the Personal Development Program, Queensland Department of Education, Brisbane, 12 February 1984

'Australian families today'. Address to Dental Studies students, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 13 March 1984

'Families today: change and challenge'. Talk given to the Queensland Guidance Officers Association, Mackay, 27–29 June 1984

Publications

'From courtship to divorce: unrealised or unrealistic expectations' in *Proceedings of the Australian Family Research Conference*, Canberra 23–25 November, 1983, Vol. III Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 30–102

Marriage Counselling Services: Priorities and Policy, *Policy Background Paper No. 3*, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, March 1984

Relations with the Media

One of the more important avenues for Institute findings to be made public is through the various media. This element of the dissemination process allows the more significant findings affecting families to be made available to a general audience, many of whom may not have the time or opportunity to read detailed reports.

Response by journalists to the release of selected research data and public policy seminars has always been healthy, but in 1983–84 there was a pleasing increase in the coverage of important issues.

Forty-eight Media Releases were sent to major rural and city outlets in all states. The main issues covered were:

- child care and family support services, coinciding with the publication of Policy Background Papers 1 and 2, also the subject of a round of seminars in most states
- a release calling on the Federal Government to give priority to the debate and passage of the Family Law Amendment Bill
- a release about divorce rate projections which 'put the record straight' and generated a great deal of interest
- a release calling for a revamp of services for young children which coincided with the publication of the Institute's submission to the Victorian Government Review of Early Childhood Services
- A media release kit on the large numbers of papers, (68 in all), presented at the first Australian Family Research Conference held at ANU, Canberra in November. This brought together findings from the Institute's own research and other Australian family studies in the fields of family law, marital satisfaction, adjustment to separation, policies and families and family support for the aged, children and families
- the release of the 1982–83 Annual Report as a 'standard reference on the trends in Australian families' led to a quick depletion of stocks
- the announcement of the new institute computer model, part of the Australian Families Income Transfer project, which measures impact of taxes and policy changes on the income equality of different family types.

The Family Information Centre keeps files of articles and press clippings about Institute research activities. The bulk of coverage in 1983–84 was concentrated in the Eastern metropolitan areas and Adelaide, an imbalance which the Institute hopes to rectify in the coming year. The issues which attracted most attention were divorce rates, marriage and young people's attitude to it, sex roles, the costs of children and child care.

Institute comment and appearances are increasingly sought on a range of topics by city and regional radio and television and these appearances have promoted further media coverage and attention to family issues in general.

Public Access to Institute Data

It has been the Institute's policy from the outset to prepare its computerised data sets for wider access to researchers and organisations wishing to conduct further analyses. This has been a time-consuming exercise. In coding the data from interviews all information which might identify respondents has been removed because much of the information collected is highly confidential and of a sensitive nature. It has been difficult too because of the shortage of staff who could devote time to documenting and archiving these extremely large data sets.

However, during 1983–84 the Institute completed the preparation of computer tapes and study guides for three major studies. These are the National Family Formation Study, the Family Dissolution/Reformation Study conducted in three States and the Study of Children in Families conducted on a sample of young children and adolescents in Victoria. Already much use has been made of these data by researchers from the Australian National University and it is planned to make data tapes available through the Social Science Data Archives located in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University.

Publications

The Institute's Publications List has grown to over 80 separate titles within the various IFS series. During the 1983–84 financial year 27 new works and 12 Fact Sheets were produced, details of which are as follows:

Newsletter

Three issues a year include No. 7, July 1983; No. 8, December 1983; and No. 9, April 1984

Diary of Social Legislation and Policy

1982 Diary published in August, 1983 in conjunction with the Social Welfare Research Centre, University of New South Wales and the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne.

Discussion Paper

No. 11, May 1984 by Peter McDonald titled *Can the family survive?*

Working Papers

No. 6, April 1984 by Paul Amato titled *The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale: an evaluation of its use on an Australian population*

No. 7, May 1984 by L. Rosenman, A.D. Shulman and M. Levine titled *Widowed families with children: personal need and societal response*

Occasional Papers

No. 3, September 1983 by Graeme Brewer titled *The impact of work on family functioning: a review of the literature*

No. 4, August 1983 by Moira Eastman titled *Education for family life: a survey of available programs and their evaluation*

No. 5, September 1983 by Don Edgar, Peter Good, Margaret Harrison, Andrew Prolisko and Simon Freidin titled *Information Collection under the Family Law Act: Melbourne Family Court hearings 1981*

Fact Sheets

12 issues on the following topics in August and September 1983:

- IFS research program
- IFS research program: longitudinal panel studies
- Marriages 1966-1982
- Marriage rate of bachelors and spinsters
- Median age of bridegrooms and brides 1921–1981
- Divorces 1966–1982
- Divorces 1966–1982, regression analysis
- Australian family types–bar graph–1981
- Australian family types–pie chart–1981
- Families with dependent children, 1981
- Australian families with dependent children according to marital status
- Children of divorce 1971–1982.

Selected Reading Lists

No. 14, September 1983 titled *Legal aspects of adoption*

Monographs

No. 3, May 1984 by Robin Winkler and Margaret van Keppel titled *Relinquishing mothers in adoption: their long-term adjustment*

No. 4, June 1984 by Terry Burke, Linda Hancock and Peter Newton titled *A roof over their heads: housing issues and families in Australia*

Policy Background Papers

No. 3, March 1984 by Ilene Wolcott titled *Marriage counselling services: priorities and policy*

No. 4, April 1984 by Patricia Harper titled *Children in stepfamilies: their legal and family status*

No. 5, June 1984 by Frank Maas titled *Should families be a focus for policies?*

AFIT Bulletin

No. 1, May 1984 compiled by Andrew Burbidge

Thesis Reproduction Series

No. 1, March 1983 by Meredith Edwards titled *The income unit in the Australian tax and social security systems*

Other Publications

August 1983 — *The television family: a content analysis of family life in prime time television* by Don Stewart

September 1983 — *Early childhood services: submission to the Victorian Government Review of Early Childhood Services*

Conferences

Australian Family Research Conference — in seven volumes, March 1984

Vol. 1: Family formation, structure and values
Vol. 2: Family law
Vol. 3: Marital adjustment and breakdown
Vol. 4: Policies and families
Vol. 5: Family support networks
Vol. 6: Family life
Vol. 7: Panel discussion, closing address and index.

In addition to these works, the FIC produced information brochures to publicise the Institute's public seminars on community based services and its first Australian Family Research Conference.

Distribution of IFS publications

During the period under review the Institute's mailing list was enlarged by over 2000 new names. This large increase in registrants can be accounted for by the Institute's media exposure and through the Institute's work being discussed at its Family Impact Seminars on Community Based Services for Children and Families as well as at the Australian Family Research Conference held in Canberra in November 1983. In addition, each time an Institute staff member speaks at a professional gathering or on radio or television programs, a number of new people register to receive the *Newletter* and notification of other Institute publications. Because of the increased numbers of people wanting publications, preliminary plans were developed during early 1984 for the introduction of charges in the next financial year for the majority of Institute publications and for their sale through a number of bookshops and other agencies such as library suppliers. It is expected that demand during the next financial year will continue to increase and that IFS publications will be used increasingly at all levels in research and academic work, by the helping professions, by those offering services to families and by government personnel and policy advisors.

Coordination of Family Studies in Australia

The Institute was charged under the *Family Law Act* with the task of attempting to coordinate Australian work on family studies. This has proved to be an almost impossible task but we have now developed a more comprehensive **network listing of government, non-government and community agencies** whose work involves families and we have extended the range of our contacts with government departments. The Director and some of the senior members of staff are used as assessors for Australian Research Grants Scheme research applications in the family studies area and the Family Information Centre serves this coordination purpose by putting people in touch with one another where their interests in family studies coincide.

The most important coordination initiative undertaken in 1983–84 was the Institute's first **Australian Family Research Conference** held in Canberra from 23 to 25 November, 1983. This conference brought together 360 people from around Australia to discuss 68 research papers in the family studies field. It provided the opportunity for the Institute to release

publicly some of the results of the first round of research projects and gave a forum for other family research being conducted in Australia.

The structure of the Conference was designed to bring all participants together on the first day when papers were presented which focussed on the changing structure and nature of marriage, fertility and household formation. Other papers on the first day focussed on changing sex-role attitudes, divorce and changes in Aboriginal and ethnic family formation.

On the second day three streams were offered, divided into sessions on Family Law, Policies and Families, and Martial Adjustment and Breakdown. On the final day two concurrent sessions were held, one on the topic of Family Support Networks and the other focussing on Children and Families. Another feature of the Conference program was a panel discussion on the topic 'Policy Making: Just Pragmatism?'

A detailed report on the Conference is contained in IFS Newsletter No. 9 (April 1984). Copies of the conference papers in seven volumes are available from the Institute at a cost of $50 or $8 per volume.

Another major initiative in this area during 1983–84 was a **Workshop on Family Studies in Professional Training**. This was conducted jointly with the Institute of Early Childhood Development of the Melbourne College of Advanced Education. The workshop brought together university and college lecturers working in such wide ranging fields as family law, police work, social work, youth work, child care, early childhood and community welfare. The workshop proved very successful and out of it has developed a call for a Family Studies Education Exchange which would coordinate an exchange of course information, films and video tapes in the family studies area as well as teaching methods that have proved effective.

Another aspect of the Institute's coordination role is to ensure that **consultants and visiting scholars** are put in contact with other workers in the family studies area around Australia.

The following scholars visited the Institute during 1983–84:

Ms Midori Komobuchi, a sociologist from the Department of Social Welfare of the University of Osaka Prefecture, spent study leave from Japan at the Institute from August 1983 to August 1984. While in Australia, Ms Komobuchi concentrated on developing her knowledge of Australian social conditions, attitudes and values. She translated a number of Japanese monographs on the family and worked on divorce trends, welfare systems and policies for families.

Dr Ann Meade, Research Officer of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) at Wellington, spent three months as Visiting Research Fellow in 1983. While at the Institute she gave a seminar on her research on New Zealand family networks and presented a paper in Canberra at the Australian Family Research Conference, 23-25 November 1983 titled 'The effects of children on family life in New Zealand and Australia' with two colleagues from the NZCER.

Professor Douglas Hooper, Professor of Social Work Studies at the University of Hull's Department of Social Administration, was Visiting Fellow at the Institute in November and December 1983. During his visit Professor Hooper conducted seminars at the Institute and at Monash University as well as consulting with various members of staff on his own work and Institute studies. He also reviewed a report on case studies taken from the Institute's Family Formation Study and participated in the first Australian Family Research Conference held in Canberra in November.

Dr Ken Fogelman, Assistant Director (Research) of the National Children's Bureau, London, visited the Institute in December after attending the Australian Family Research Conference. Dr Fogelman gave a seminar at the Institute on aspects of the UK longitudinal studies of children born in 1946, 1958 and 1970 in which he reviewed the particular contributions that studies of this kind can make to family research. He directed most of the seminar to data from the 1958 cohort of the National Child Development Study.

Mr Malcolm Wicks, Director of the Centre for Family Policy Studies in the United Kingdom, visited the Institute after being one of the panel members for the discussion 'Policy-making: just pragmatism?' at the Australian Family Research Conference in Canberra. While at the Institute Mr Wicks had discussions with the Director and staff working on policy research areas. He gave a seminar to the Institute together with Jonathon Bradshaw on the work of the Centre for Family Policy Studies in the UK.

Professor Jonathon Bradshaw, Director of the Social Policy Research Unit at the University of York, was also a panel member at the Australian Family Research Conference session on 'Policy-making'. After visiting Canberra, he spent time in Melbourne at the Institute and gave a talk on the work done at York in the Social Policy Resarch Unit outlining some of the difficulties of research on policy and related issues.

In September 1983, the Institute was visited by two researchers from the United Kingdom, **Professor Roger Hadley**, from the Department of Social Administration at the University of Lancaster and **Dr Clare Wenger**, Research Fellow from the University College of North Wales. During their visit they gave a seminar at the Institute with Professor Hadley speaking on the decentralisation of social services in the UK followed by specific case study material from Dr Wenger's study on support networks of the elderly.

In October 1983, **Mrs Rica Davis** of the National Council of Women in Britain visited the Institute. She was visiting Australia on a Winston Churchill Fellowship to investigate issues of social security.

The Institute was also visited by **Dr Martin Bradley**, Senior Lecturer in Education of the Liverpool Institute of Higher Education, UK; and by **Dr Peter Grootings** in March 1984 of the Vienna Centre (European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences), Austria.

Professor Orjan Hultaker, from the Department of Sociology at Uppsala University, Sweden, spent the months of March and April at the Institute assisting in the preparation for the International ISA-CFR Seminar to be held in August 1984. Professor Hultaker is Secretary of the International Sociological Association's Committee on Family Research which is co-sponsor of the Seminar with the Institute. Professor Hultaker gave a seminar at the Institute on research on the mechanisms of family functioning. He also was helpful in staff discussions on family policy and economic issues in addition to his work on reviewing the abstracts of papers for presentation at the International CFR Seminar.

Professor Howard Eckel from the University of Nebraska gave a seminar in May 1984, in which he spoke about the impact of new technologies on work roles, education and the family.

Research

The research activities of the Institute in 1983–84 can be described under the headings: Collating Existing Information About Families, Explanatory Research, Policy Evaluation, and Encouragement of Research.

Collating Existing Information About Families

There exists in the public domain a large amount of information about Australian families. This information is scattered and is contained in a variety of forms such as reports of research conducted in universities and government agencies, the Census and surveys of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and reports and records of helping agencies and services. The Institute has attempted to collate and organise some of this information to gain a clearer picture of the situation of families in Australia today.

In previous years the Institute has been unable to devote resources to collate and to re-analyse large data sets such as those available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and from other studies. However, during 1983–84 a great deal of progress has been made in this regard. Because its own data sets from the national Family Formation Study of 18–34 year olds were available this year for analysis, it was possible for the Institute to fit this data in to the picture of families provided by the Census and other ABS social surveys. Much of this information was included in the *IFS 1982–83 Annual Report* and need not be duplicated here. However, the Institute has focussed very largely on providing a more detailed and comprehensive picture of changes in the structure of the Australian population and the variety of families that go to make it up.

A large number of the Institute's studies were designed from the outset to fill gaps in this research information. In particular the studies on Family Support Networks and Children in Families were designed to answer questions that no previous study had answered. There are now published reports on these and they are listed in the section on Publications in Chapter 2.

Explanatory Research

From the descriptive level the Institute has attempted to move to that of explanation. Since it is the Institute's role to improve understanding of factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia it is necessary that the Institute explain what factors seem to undermine family stability.

It has been possible to identify a number of factors leading to changes in processes of family formation, marital dissolution, the difficulties of families with children, the need for family support networks and services and the economic consequences of divorce as indicated in the research papers presented at the November 1983 Australian Family Research Conference (see page 22).

Economic Consequences of Marital Breakdown

Although all of the Institute's studies have been described in previous Annual Reports, further analysis has been conducted and a great deal of report writing completed on these studies during 1983–84. However, our major initiative in the explanatory research area during 1983–84 was the **Economic Consequences of Marital Breakdown Study** conducted in conjunction with the Law Reform Commission's Matrimonial Property Inquiry and the

Family Court. The Institute had planned to conduct a follow-up study to its initial study of Family Dissolution/Reformation. This follow-up study was originally designed to examine the economic consequences of divorce on men and women and on the children involved. When the Matrimonial Property Inquiry was set up by the Government, the IFS Board of Management determined that, without much difficulty, the Institute could convert that study into one that would feed more directly into the purposes of the Matrimonial Property Inquiry. With some slight shift of emphasis, the Institute was able to incorporate a more focussed look at the division of matrimonial property and the way in which both assets and liabilities were split between couples following marital breakdown.

The Institute's survey of the economic consequences of marriage breakdown is designed to provide information on the financial position of several groupings of men and women who had been separated for a maximum of five years at the time of interview and who had been divorced through the Melbourne Registry to the Family Court.

By 'financial position' is meant the relationship between the economic circumstances of respondents during the latter part of the cohabiting period of their marriages, immediately after separation, and at the time of interview. The study seeks to measure the determinants of the pre-, and post-, separation economic situation, the settlement result and its impact, and the present economic position. Included were questions relating to 'hard' data, such as incomes and valuations, and those aimed at ascertaining respondents' perceptions of the fairness of the settlement, their ability to cope with emotional and financial difficulties, and future plans and expectations. Respondents were also asked to comment on how they thought the law should operate in different hypothetical situations, and to give assessments of the role of their lawyer and their understanding of the law when financial decisions were made.

A study of this magnitude has not previously been undertaken anywhere, as far as we can ascertain, although some very interesting research has been conducted in California by Lenore Weitzman (1981) and in England by Todd and Jones (1972) and Eekelaar and McLean (1983). The different social, economic and legal environments of these countries, plus slightly different emphases of earlier research, made it imperative that an Australian empirical study should become a focus of any law reforms in the area of matrimonial property.

Overseas studies have highlighted the economic vulnerability of two particular groups of women affected by marriage breakdown — those with dependent children and those whose marriages have lasted for quite some time and who are therefore middle aged or older at separation. Women with dependent children continue to retain custody of them in an overwhelming majority of cases, despite a more flexible approach to custody determinations within and outside the courts, and their workforce participation is affected by their child rearing and sole parenting. Older women belong, by and large, to the generation of those who discontinued work on marriage or on the birth of their first child, and are economically reliant on their husbands.

Previous research has also pointed to a disparity in the extent to which men and women are economically affected by marriage breakdown. Weitzman's Californian study shows that, on her measurements, one year after divorce men were 42 per cent better off and women 73 per cent worse off. Eekelaar and McLean in England stress the poor economic position of custodial women, a position they argue can only be ameliorated by remarriage. The Institute naturally wanted to test these findings with an Australian divorced sample.

Meetings held during January with the Institute, Law Reform Commission and Family Court staff, and consultants Dr Bettina Cass and Dr Meredith Edwards, centred around the size and nature of the sample, and the content of the questionnaire. Because of time and budgetary constraints it was agreed that the sample would be limited geographically to those people who were divorced through the Melbourne Registry of the Family Court. As this was the only registry for the State, the working group was satisfied that the population was as representative as it was possible to obtain, with a sufficient spread of urban and rural respondents.

It was agreed that the sample would be drawn for the following characteristics:

Figure 1 Economic Consequences of Marital Breakdown Study: sample characteristics

Group 1 Separations involving children

Marriages of 5–14 years to separation
First marriage for both parties
Two children

(i) separated 4–5 years — 1981 divorces
100 men
100 women

(ii) separated about 2 years — 1983 divorces
100 men
100 women

Group 2 Separations involving older women

Wife aged 45–59 at separation
Marriages of at least 15 years to separation
First marriage for both parties

100 men — 1981 divorces
100 women

Because of concerns about client confidentiality expressed by the Family Court, a system was devised in which court clerical staff extracted names and last known addresses from the court files. These particulars were then transferred to the Principal Registry in Sydney and letters signed by the Chief Judge were sent out requesting the participation of the selected respondents. In anticipation of a response rate of 20 per cent, 3000 letters were sent out.

The draft questionnaire was piloted on approximately 50 respondents and the two interviewers then involved reported back their comments on the success or otherwise of particular questions. This valuable exercise allowed the questionnaire to be improved.

The response to the Chief Judge's letter was higher than was expected with positive responses received from nearly 900 people. Ultimately about 830 people were interviewed because some who originally agreed to take part later changed their minds, some moved or were interstate or overseas and could not be interviewed. About 30 interviewers from Melbourne and major country areas were selected and trained at the beginning of May. Their early interviews were scrutinised and all field work was coordinated by the Institute.

Towards the end of May, when interviewing was well under way, a team of four casual Institute staff was selected to check interview schedules for internal consistency and completion of all details, and to begin coding of occupational and education categories. An additional important coding exercise involved the asset history sheets which set out ownership of assets and liabilities of respondents during marriage and traced their disposition and value at settlement. This in many cases was a difficult topic to code, and to obtain consistency one person was made responsible.

By the end of June, the majority of interviewing for the study was completed and checking and coding were well under way. Following completion of those tasks detailed analysis of the data will commence and the preliminary findings will be communicated to the Matrimonial Property Inquiry by the end of 1984.

Policy Evaluation Research

During financial year 1983–84 the Institute continued its ongoing activities in the evaluation of the way in which policies impact upon families. One of our major efforts in this area carried over from the previous year was the **submission to the Victorian Government Review of Early Childhood Services.** This has now been published as a report entitled *Early Childhood Services.* In this report the Institute reviews the literature about the importance of early childhood to the development of competence in children. It also examines changing family structures and their significance for children, research findings on the effect of quality of child care and the impact on young children of mothers in the paid workforce. The Institute argues that the justification for increased child care services lies not only in the needs of working women but particularly in the needs of children themselves. Much of the detail of this argument was spelled out in the Annual Report for 1982–83 and the published report has received widespread publicity and use in Government circles.

A major **report on housing** funded by the Institute in 1982–83 has now been published. The monograph is titled *A Roof Over Their Heads: Housing Issues and Families in Australia.* This work was contracted to Terry Burke and Linda Hancock of the Swinburne Institute of Technology and Dr Peter Newton of the CSIRO Division of Building Research. Consideration is being given to launching the report through a series of Family Policy Impact Seminars in the new financial year.

Further to the Institute's interest in **the problems of youth in families,** much of the data contained in the national study of Family Formation has been analysed. Two reports have been prepared. One entitled *Leaving Home* by Dr Christabel Young of the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, outlines the patterns by which young people leave home to set themselves up as independent adults. This study reveals a shift from the 1950s and 1960s where the major reason for young people leaving home was to become married towards a situation where young people are leaving home earlier and for reasons of conflict and independence rather than to marry. The policy implications of these changes were spelled out in a paper prepared by Dr Edgar and Frank Maas for the International Seminar on Social Change and Family Policies to be held in August 1984. A number of aspects of the declining youth labour market, the relative importance of schooling to youth and the need for rethinking of the whole system of youth allowances is outlined in this paper.

The Institute was also asked to comment on the **Victorian legislation on infertility and medical procedures** and **the status of children** and on Victoria's new **adoption legislation.**

The infertility issue is one that is of increasing concern to families around Australia and the Institute plans to continue monitoring the moral, social and legal issues involved. It is closely related to the question of adoption in that as the medical procedures are developed, questions of the rights of children to access to records of their parentage have to be thought through and clarified in the law.

The Institute was also asked by the South Australian Health Commission to evaluate research conducted in that State on **child incest**. The research was based on a telephone survey of people who had experienced or had knowledge of child sexual abuse. Our evaluation of the research report suggests directions for further research and government action to improve both detection and treatment of families in which this serious problem occurs.

A special development in the policy evaluation area during 1983–84 has been the **Australian Families Income Transfers (AFIT)** project. This income transfers project makes use of computer modelling to evaluate both the costs and the impact on different family types of proposed changes to the taxation and welfare structure. Much Institute time has been put into the development of the computer program, but also into work on existing data sets to provide a better cross classification of family types. The difficulty has been to obtain unit record data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. With access to the Census data tape the Institute has been able to extend the program much more effectively but it has yet to receive the 1981–1982 Incomes Survey data tape which will enable the Institute to combine analyses of tax changes with welfare transfer changes.

The first *AFIT Bulletin*, published in May 1984, demonstrated the likely effects of three taxation options that were being proposed for the 1984–85 federal Budget. A great deal of interest was expressed in this Bulletin and its implications for planning. The Institute hopes that by the time of the next Budget we will be in a position to assess accurately the proposals being put to the government.

As noted in the last Annual Report it is surprising that proposals for taxation and welfare reform have in the past proceeded without a database of this type to test the assumptions and effects being asserted by various groups. The Board of Management of the institute regards the AFIT project as one of the Institute's most important developments hampered severely by the failure to upgrade the Institute's computer and by shortage of staff trained in the welfare economics area. The AFIT project puts the Institute in a position of being able to comment on matters of central concern to every family in Australia. Without adequate computer facilities this important capacity will remain underdeveloped.

Encouragement of Research

The Institute has also continued to encourage other researchers to conduct research in the family studies area. The **Support Grants** scheme in 1983–84 provided the following grants:

Figure 2 IFS Support Grant Applicants 1983–84

Applicant	*Purpose*	*Amount* $
Mr Tim Anstey Mental Health Research and Evaluation Centre, South Australian Health Commission	To conduct further analysis of survey data on the effects on parents caring for an intellectually handicapped child	5 000

Applicant	*Purpose*	*Amount* $
Dr Gabor Kovacs Medical Research Centre, Prince Henry's Hospital, Melbourne	To conduct a follow up study of the development of children conceived by AID	2 500
Mr David Hayward, Mr Peter Nisbett, Mr David Campbell Centre for Urban Studies, Swinburne Institute of Technology, Melbourne	To conduct a pilot study of the housing needs of one parent families	3 000
Dr Iain Pratt Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, New South Wales	To prepare a report covering the provision of housing, government housing policies and the impacts on different family types in Australia	5 500

Because of the lack of staff within the Institute itself, several of the major data analysis areas were contracted to external researchers. These included Dr Christabel Young, Australian National University, to analyse the Family Formation data on young people leaving home and Dr Siew-Ean Khoo, Australian National University, on migrant families and on de facto couples included in that study. Encouraging outside researchers by contracting some analysis of Institute data to other institutions has proved a satisfactory way around the shortage of research staff at the Institute itself. However, in cases where external researchers have not been involved in the detailed process of designing studies and are not aware of the range of inter-relationships of other Institute studies and concerns, it is important for the Institute to assist them to interpret the data in a manner which enables them to draw out the practical policy implications of the research findings.

Another important and growing aspect of the Institute's encouragement work has been responses to inquiries from external academics and students. Demands from graduate students in the social science areas grew to such an extent that the Institute had to apply stricter procedures to control their access to and use of staff advisory time. Nonetheless we have advertised through the Newsletter the availability of Institute staff advice and the importance for students planning research in the family studies area to contact the Institute and inform us of their work. The Family Information Centre has been able to help with such student enquiries (see Table 2) and has thus deflected some of the load from research staff.

Policy Advice and Policy Evaluation

During 1983–84 a concerted effort has been made by the Institute's staff to catch up on the backlog of analyses of data from completed studies. This effort resulted not only from the shortage of funds to conduct new research but also from the Board's conviction that the full benefit of completed research studies should be drawn from existing data before moving into new areas. As a result the Institute has been able to interpret a number of clear policy implications from its major studies. These have focussed on the problems of youth transition, marriage support, family law and children in families.

There are several pressing issues which the Institute would like to be able to tackle but has insufficient resources at present to do so. One of these is the area of youth policy and in particular the way in which youth allowances may be changed to assist young people and their families in the process of deciding between staying on at school or moving out into the

workforce. Another area that we would like to do more work in is that of infertility and adoption, as previously mentioned. The Institute has also been hampered in its efforts in the tax and welfare transfer field. As outlined above, the AFIT program must be given higher priority because of its importance to every aspect of Government planning for the well-being of families.

An initiative that has developed during 1983–84 out of the Institute's Children in Families Study has been the extension of the work on the relationships between education and the family. Ms Gay Ochiltree, who presented a paper on Family School Community Relationships at the OECD Conference in Japan last year, has been invited to return to do further work in this area. Japan is replicating the Institute's study on Children in Families and this will form the basis of discussions in Japan when she visits later in 1984.

In the policy advice area the Institute continues to experience difficulties in its capacity to respond to immediately urgent issues. For example the federal government's Inquiry into Maintenance Enforcement needed more data than was available on levels of maintenance awarded and why custodial parents were in many cases not receiving regular maintenance payments. The timetable allowed for the Inquiry would not have permitted the Institute to respond to a request to carry out even a limited survey, had such a survey been warranted. Better forward planning meant that the Institute was able to meet policy needs more effectively in the Matrimonial Property area. Because the Institute had taken the initiative during 1983 to assist Professor David Hambly in designing the parameters of his pending reference on Matrimonial Property, it was able to move its research in a direction which lent itself more effectively to the needs of the Matrimonial Property Inquiry now being conducted by the Law Reform Commission under Professor Hambly.

The Board of Management agreed to the conversion of the planned study of the Economic Consequences of Marital Breakdown to cover those more specific issues relating to property division and post-divorce economic arrangements which would assist the Matrimonial Property Inquiry. This is an excellent example of how, with proper planning and cooperation, effective team work can operate. The Family Court, the Law Reform Commission and the Institute of Family Studies worked together as a team to develop this major study in detail. The Institute funded the study in its entirety because the Law Reform Commission had not been given funding for this level of research in its reference on matrimonial property.

At the federal level the Institute has built up contacts with the Departments of Social Security, Education and Youth Affairs, Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and Prime Minister and Cabinet. There are some difficulties for the Institute because of its Melbourne location, but of greater importance is the development of consultative mechanisms by which the Institute's expertise can be called on as a matter of course where policies affecting families are involved.

The same is true for the Institute's relationships with the States. The Institute has worked hard at building up contacts with relevent Departments at the State level. From time to time the Institute is asked either to conduct research for State governments or to conduct evaluations of their various Family Support Services Schemes. This would obviously be a desirable activity for the Institute, but lack of funding and lack of staff has made it impossible for acceptance of most of these requests.

In 1983–84 the Institute was asked to respond to a number of reports prepared by and for the federal and state governments. The following submissions were prepared and are available from the Institute on request:

- Response to the Report of the Committee to consider the Social, Ethical and Legal Issues arising from In Vitro Fertilization (The Waller Report) (Victoria)
- Response to the Report of the Adoption Legislation Review Committee (Victoria)
- Response to the Report of the National Maintenance Enforcement Inquiry (Federal)
- Comments on the Status of Children (Amendment) Bill 1984 and Infertility (Medical Procedures) Bill, 1984 (Victoria)
- Comments on the Adoption Bill 1984 and the Children (Guardianship and Custody) Bill, 1984 (Victoria)
- Submission entitled *Early Childhood Services* to the Victorian Government Review of Early Childhood Services.
- Report for the Northern Territory Department of Community Development titled 'Domestic violence between adults in the Northern Territory: a review of current services and a strategy for the future'.
- Continuing evaluation of the supervised access-changeover centre in Adelaide.

In the last section of this Annual Report we outline some measures which we consider may lead to a more effective relationship between the Institute and various levels of government policy making.

3 Operational Difficulties

Any evaluation of the Institute's achievements in relation to the purposes for which it was established must be in terms of both its general functions under the *Family Law Act* and the specific tasks as defined by the Director and Board which have formed the basis of the Institute's first four years of operation. Such an evaluation would have to assess the Institute's success or failure insofar as it has:

- identified the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia
- developed understanding of the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia
- promoted the protection of the family
- conducted research on factors affecting family life and family structures in Australia which serves the above three goals
- supervised research on family matters sponsored by the Institute
- conducted ongoing analyses of how changes in government policies affect families of different types within the Australian social structure
- acted as a central repository of information about past, current and projected research on families in Australia
- provided expert consultancy advice to others
- educated the public and professionals dealing with families through the dissemination of information
- evaluated the effects of marriage counselling, pre-marital education and other services and those areas of the law aimed at assisting families
- encouraged, collated and coordinated the research and theorising of the various disciplines involved with families
- established itself as an authority which may be consulted by all who work in 'the family area'
- established networks, both in Australia and overseas, for a coordinated analysis of factors affecting the nature of the family in modern society
- administered the funds made available for its work in an efficient and effective manner.

In the following paragraphs some of the operational difficulties affecting the performance of these tasks are raised.

Administrative Problems

The major administrative difficulty faced by the Institute is its lack of adequate staffing. From the first year of operation the Director and the Board of Management argued that in order to achieve the functions which seemed to be implicit in the wording of the Act it would need a minimum staffing level of between 36 and 40 full-time staff. Each year it has been argued that it would make more sense for the Institute to be staffed at this level rather than to have to wait on minor increments in staffing each year. But at present, the Institute operates on an inadequate staffing basis and has already had to cut back many of its activities in order not to overburden the existing highly dedicated staff.

Research Problems

Budget and staffing

The total research budget for the Institute has declined in real terms over the last two years and as a result the Board of Management had to decide to restrict new data collection during this financial year to only one project — the Economic Consequences of Marital Breakdown Study — and even here the costs had to be phased across two financial years. A major difficulty is that the inadequate staffing levels have forced the Institute to use a significant proportion of its research budget for casual staff. In the normal course of events this would be quite acceptable in that field workers and interviewers and data coders would be paid for out of a research budget. In the Institute's case, however, inadequate staffing at the research assistant level has meant that several people brought on for very short-term tasks have had to be continued in order to ensure that the data are analysed and written up properly. There has been no other solution to this and it will be a continuing problem for the Institute's research program.

Study delays

The consequence has been to delay by two years the follow-up phase of the original study on Family Formation. We have also had to delay commencement of a major planned study on Family Functioning which would have looked at the ways in which people negotiate, organise, manage and experience their family lives. This study would involve examination of a range of current policy issues such as employment, housing, child care, government benefits (such as Family Allowance, Dependent Spouse Rebate), youth policy, sex roles, etc. We have also not been able to implement the original plan to accompany each major study with a series of in-depth case studies looking more closely at the processes involved. This plan was agreed to by the first Board of Management as it was seen (at that time and it is still valid) that large survey data could provide the broad picture but more detailed case study information would be needed in order to explain the processes affecting family life. Case studies have been possible only in two instances. One has been with a group of intact marriages from the Family Formation Study and the other with sub-sets of the Geelong sample of the Family Support Networks Study. These case studies have proved invaluable in throwing light on the broader survey data but because the Institute has not been able to do case studies on other topics or sections of the sample such as young people leaving home,

child care, de facto couples, step parent families, children going through the divorce of their parents, the Institute has not been able to achieve as much as it might have in explaining the major factors affecting marital and family stability.

Computer inadequacy

Perhaps the worst feature of the lack of increase in the Institute's budget has been the inability to upgrade the computer facilities. The Institute initially assessed the computer side of its activities very carefully and developed a plan involving purchase of a facility which could be readily upgraded to meet future requirements. An upgrade of the computer's Central Processor Unit is now essential but budget restrictions have prevented this from being done. This has resulted in a slowing down of computer processing time and the need to schedule staff use of the computer in ways which seriously inhibit productivity.

Access to other government data

In Australia it is a general complaint that it is too difficult to obtain access to large data sets collected by government such as those held by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Department of Social Security (DSS) and the Taxation Office. The Institute has developed a close cooperative relationship with the ABS and the Bureau has allowed the Institute access to data on conditions which are better than apply to most users. However, that access is considerably less in terms of range of data and timing of availability than we would wish to be the case. The Institute would like to see a major rethinking of the rationale for ABS data collections and of the attitude to release of those data. The same argument applies to DSS and Taxation data. Much of the data that is obtained by ABS, DSS and other government departments is under-analysed and there should be much more re-analysis of the data by external researchers from a particular policy perspective. Technological advances must by now have taken us to the point where blanket confidentiality provisions can no longer be appropriate and the exclusion of identifying information a relatively straightforward task.

With the appointment of two research staff with expertise in the area of demography, the Institute has been able to demonstrate how effective the use of such data sets can be, and we have made an important contribution to the 1986 Census in relation to a better categorisation of family structures and relationships. In a similar way Institute staff members have been able to contribute to ABS discussions of other social surveys which will throw light on family relationships.

Family law statistics

Related to the research problem is the question of poor statistical collections, particularly in the family law area. Since its inception the Institute has argued that it and the Family Court and the Family Law Council need more systematic records of court clients and the outcomes of decisions made. The Institute, the Family Court and the Family Law Council reached agreement on a new set of forms to be used under the Family Law Regulations. In particular, we were concerned with the Form 4 used to apply for divorce. As a result, the form will now include information about the address at time of separation, the occupation of both applicant and spouse and the number of times each has been previously married. Without this information it has been impossible for anyone, including the Institute, to identify socio-economic and geographical variations in the instance of divorce.

Agreement was also reached with the Committee planning the new computer for the Family Court on a range of data items to be recorded by the Court. The Institute was concerned especially with the recording of Court outcomes. These should include decisions about the division of matrimonial property, maintenance payments, custody and access provisions for children, and disputes over related matters. It is not yet clear whether the Family Court computer, which now will not come into operation until late 1986, will be able to cope with all of these data items. Given shortage of staff in the Family Court itself it is understandable that the Court is reluctant to burden them further with such data recording tasks.

However, it seems absurd that when the government has set up separate inquiries into maintenance enforcement, matrimonial property and dispute under the family law, proper data collection systems do not exist which could provide most of the necessary information. The *Family Law Act* is one of the most controversial pieces of legislation in recent Australian history and there will be a continuing demand for detailed and accurate information about the Court's activities. It is therefore not satisfactory for either the government or the Institute or, we would suggest, for the Court itself, to have a computer system set up only for internal Court administrative purposes.

One further comment on the cost effectiveness of more detailed statistical collections is that if they were available the costs of research by the Institute and by the Family Law Council would be much lower. Interviewing is an extremely expensive enterprise. If the raw data were available to provide a picture of the pattern of decisions and Court outcomes, then interviewing could be confined to smaller samples dealing with matters of expectations, reactions and responses to the legal process.

Policy Impact Issues

The low priority given to families in the policy development area has become increasingly clear to the Institute. One of the difficulties is that there is no clear constituency for the Institute for Family Studies when one compares a universal social unit such as families with specific groups such as migrants, youth, unions or women. It appears to be the case that everyone espouses the rhetoric of support for families but there is little concern with examining the family impact of policy changes. Instead, the impact on the economy, or the impact on specific groups such as pensioners, or those with children, appears to be the pattern.

There appears to be an ignorance of what is happening to Australian families, of their real needs and problems and of the way every policy impacts on family life. That is why the Institute in its Annual Report 1982–83 outlined in great detail the major findings from its research on factors affecting marital and family stability. That report we hope serves the purpose of providing a readily available source of information for all politicians about the facts and issues to be taken into account in making policies which would enhance rather than damage the well-being of Australia's families.

Statutory Independence

From time to time questions about the Institute's role as an independent statutory authority arise. The Institute as a statutory body is very different from a Department which advises governments. Departmental advice can be accepted, rejected, or censored insofar as it accords with the priorities of the government of the day and that is as it should be.

Statutory authorities, however, are set up for other purposes, one of which is to provide services to the wider public independent of the party in power. They are not funded by the government in the same way as the universities whose traditional role is to act as social critic and to work on the frontiers of knowledge which might otherwise be neglected for reasons of immediate, political or economic expediency. The statutory authority also may do both, that is act on the frontiers of knowledge and as social critic, but its tasks are more focussed. In the case of the Institute of Family Studies that focus is 'to promote, by the conduct, encouragement and co-ordination of research and other appropriate means, the identification of, and development of understanding of, the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia'. That statement does not suggest that the Institute is limited in any way by party political considerations or that its 'identification of' and 'development of understanding of' is to be confined to servicing the government of the day. Indeed the wider such understanding is spread, presumably the more likely it is that marital and family stability can be preserved.

Research is never neutral, the very issues chosen, the questions asked, the interpretations made, of necessity always reflect value choices made to the exclusion of alternative positions. It is impossible to simply gather the facts and disseminate the information, leaving to others the drawing of conclusions, the interpretation of causes and policy implications. Even the Census makes political value choices by including or excluding questions on ethnicity, assets, de facto marital status and so on. The ABS tries hard to avoid asking sensitive questions but even omissions may create bias.

However, the Institute has always taken the view that it should not pronounce publicly on policy issues until it had its own data or analyses of other data sets on which to rely. The Institute is not another lobby group; its constituency is not merely the poor, the needy or one-parent families, but rather every Australian family.

We have never aimed simply at developing an 'Institute' view but have encouraged the publication of a variety of independent views by our researchers and consultants. These are presented for public scrutiny and judged on their merits.

The other major distinction that must be held to is that the Institute as a statutory authority must not make overtly party political comment. Inevitably the value position taken by the Institute and its staff or by individual consultants will appear to coincide with one or other of the political parties. But the Institute has been at pains to avoid arguing for one political view as opposed to another. The stance has been instead to evaluate alternative suggestions about policies affecting families and to provide a testable assessment of their likely effectiveness or their actual effect. This will inevitably offend some people but without this independent assessment and evaluation of alternative views, the purpose of such a statutory authority would not be served.

Amendment of Enabling Legislation

The Board of Management of the Institute has over several meetings considered the issue of the statutory role of the Institute of Family Studies and the inadequacy of its enabling legislation. As a result the Board is preparing a briefing paper for the Attorney-General which outlines more specifically the functions as they have developed and as they are seen to be important for such an Institute. In addition, the board has recommended that the following statement be accepted first as a de facto statement of the Institute's objectives and functions and that the Attorney-General give consideration to amendment of the relevant sections of the Family Law Act to ensure that the future course of the Institute is recognised via these objectives and functions.

Role and Functions of the Institute

The Institute's overall role is —

1 To serve as a national authority for consultation on matters affecting the well-being of all Australian families.

2 To suggest and encourage the development of improved methods of family support, including measures preventive of family disruption, education processes and ways in which families can better meet the criteria of equal human rights now embodied in Australian legislation.

In particular, this role is to be carried out via the following functions —

3 To monitor trends in the demographic and social structure of Australian families and identify the implications of such changes for social policy.

4 To conduct research on the operation and effect of the Family Law Act and to encourage better statistical and research information under that Act.

5 To conduct research on factors relating to family functioning, with the object of recommending relevant means of family support.

6 To evaluate on a continuing basis the economic status and well-being of Australian families.

7 To monitor, and report on the effect on family functioning and family relationships of federal and state legislation and programs of family suport.

8 To disseminate, via media information, publications and public seminars, the findings of its research, with the object of improving community understanding of factors affecting marital and family well-being.

9 To coordinate and encourage wider research on Australian families by the making of grants (under S.114 (b) and any other means).

10 To act as a national repository of information about Australian families.

Proposed Amendments

While the board is of the view that the Institute can, with recognition of the above statement of its role and functions, continue to operate under the existing Part XIV A of the *Family Law Act*, it wishes to indicate the desirability of amending the Act at some time in the future to include that statement and to clarify the powers and structure of the Institute.

The following changes are seen as worthy of consideration.

Name or title

The Institute has established itself on the international level, and is often referred to as The *Australian* Institute of Family Studies. It has also established a presence and status throughout Australia, but is often referred to (because of location) as the 'Melbourne' Institute of Family Studies. Its national role should be emphasised in its actual title.

There are further difficulties with the words 'Institute' and 'Studies'. 'Institute' suggests a somewhat narrowly academic focus, while 'Studies' suggests that research is the only function. As should be clear from the statement of functions, this narrow role does not, and (in the Board's view) should not, reflect what the Institute does.

A better title may be the *Australian Families Commission*, one which stresses both the organisation's national identity and its active role of promoting the interests of all families. The obvious parallels are the Law Reform Commission (often referred to as Australian Law Reform Commission) and the Human Rights Commission, both of which have a clear 'commission' to propose and influence policy in their areas.

Corporate Body Status

The present Institute has no clear financial powers specified in the Act. This has created difficulties in obtaining delegations, establishing statutory independence from inappropriate departmental procedures, the intake and retention of moneys from sale of publications, and inflexibility in staffing levels. We believe there is a case for corporate body status to enable the Institute to fulfil its role in the most efficient way possible.

Structures and Powers

At present, the Act vaguely states the role of the Board of Management to be 'the general direction of the Institute', with the Director making day-to-day decisions. We feel the respective roles of the governing body, and the Director could be clarified, along the following lines:

Council of the Commission

- to comprise at least 6 and not more than 12 members, including the Director, appointed by the Governor-General. They should serve in their own right and not as representatives of any particular groups or organisations.

The role of the Council would be

- to determine major policy directions
- to determine research priorities and to monitor progress of such research
- to recommend staffing and funding levels
- to approve budget allocations for projects with forward financial programming on a five year basis, to receive regular reports on financial status, and to see that regular audits are conducted
- to recommend Support Grants (under S.114B (2) (b) as at present or independently as a Commission)
- to approve the Annual Reports, with forward operational plans and audit records included.

Director

- to be responsible for the day-to-day running of the Commission, within the priorities and policies set by the Council. This would include (as at present)
  - staff appointments
  - administrative structure and management
  - research and policy implementation
  - allocation of staff duties and monitoring of performance
  - financial management
  - day-to-day executive decision-making.

The present Board of Management assumes that the suggestions made above may well need to be modified in the light of further experience and discussion, but wishes to indicate the need for legislative clarification at some point in the not too distant future.